

6.20.2008 - Rahall Commemorates West Virginia's 145th Birthday

In recognition of West Virginia's 145th Birthday this Friday, June 20th, U.S. Rep. Nick J. Rahall (D-WV) submitted the following statement into the Congressional Record to honor the history, heritage, and heroes of the Mountain State over the past 145.

EXTENSION OF REMARKS

Honorable
Nick J. Rahall, II

Of West Virginia

In the
House of Representatives

Recognition
of the 145th Birthday of the State of West Virginia

Thursday,
June 19, 2008

Madam Speaker,

I rise today in recognition of the 145th birthday of my home state, West Virginia.

The most violent conflict in the history of our Nation, the Civil War, gave America a new definition of freedom, strengthened the role of the federal government, and ultimately reconciled our fractured Union. For West Virginians, the 1861-1865 conflict remains significant for another reason: Virginia was rendered in two, east and west, and a new state, West Virginia, was born.

This Friday marks the 145th birthday of the State of West Virginia.

I ask all West Virginians—the hardest working, most hospitable, and most patriotic people in the United States—to join me in celebrating how far our State has come.

West Virginians have long known their uniqueness and celebrated it. As the only state to be formed by seceding from its parent state, West Virginia blazed a trail of independence of mind and spirit in a country that was tearing itself apart. West Virginia is the only state to achieve statehood by the proclamation of a president on the provision that West Virginia would support the gradual abolishment of slavery in its newly formed constitution. On June 20, 1863, West Virginia became the 35th state.

On this West Virginia Day, I reflect upon the treasures of our state—truly one of the most beautiful in the Nation. With its majestic mountains, rolling hills, awesome gorges and rivers, picturesque towns, hospitable people, and a “wild and wonderful” atmosphere, I thank God for the opportunity to call it home.

Many historic figures have lived and traveled through the Mountain State on their way to shaping the course of our Nation’s history. Daniel Boone settled and lived in present day Kanawha County. Stonewall Jackson, the stalwart Civil War general, was born in Clarksburg and Pearl S. Buck—Pulitzer Prize and Nobel Prize winning author was born in Hillsboro, Pocahontas County.

Many modern day heroes and stars also hail from the hills of West Virginia. Jennifer Garner, who received a Golden Globe for her performances on ABC’s hit television drama “Alias,” is a Charleston native. Chuck Yeager, who broke the sound barrier and has used his influence to promote scholarship and development opportunities for the state, was born in Myra. The mining town of Coalwood, in McDowell County is now world-renown as the home of Homer Hickam, best-selling author of Rocket Boys, upon which the award-winning 1999 motion picture “October Sky” was based.

In addition to celebrities, both historical and modern, West Virginia’s elected leaders have brought vision and opportunity to our state. Most notable, Senator Robert C. Byrd, the “Big Daddy” of West Virginia politics, is the longest serving Senator in history and has secured billions of dollars for the future of our state. He remains a force to be reckoned with in the Senate with his longevity and leadership.

Home to an abundance of natural resources, West Virginia has helped feed and power our Nation. West Virginia’s “Coal Keeps the Lights On.” Our agricultural industry provides dairy, poultry, and feed crops for our State and beyond. The lumber industry makes use of the bountiful forests that cover 75 percent of our beautiful terrain.

Lastly the greatest gift and most precious resource our state has nurtured are West Virginians themselves—honest, hard-working people who are very the lifeblood of our state. Today West Virginians thank the Lord for our bountiful blessings, bound together in loyalty and love for our state as we remind ourselves that, yes—John Denver was right, West Virginia is truly almost Heaven.

Happy Birthday West Virginia.